

Western Sahara

11 nov – 18 nov 2023



The crew - Klaas Jan Arkema

Klaas Jan Arkema, Willem Wind, Tim de Boer & Jillis Roos

Intro

Mammals were the main purpose of the trip, we saw all the targets. We also looked for other species groups. We saw most of the bird species. But failed to see the Saharan specials like Golden Nightjar, Sudan Golden Sparrow or Dunn's Lark. We saw 6 species of reptiles with Horned Viper and Chameleon as highlight. We also went to Imlili by ourselves. This small sebkha (a depression with salted bottom) is characterized by permanent pools of salt water with a unique species of fish in it. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9879152/>).

Preps

This [trip report](#) provides good information on the preparations and ins and outs of mammal watching in Western Sahara.

A few additional notes

- Renting a 4x4 is a must.
- We stayed at this [apartment](#). It was fine, good place to sleep and plenty of stores nearby. Contact was via WhatsApp and Google translate. Car via a garage (+212 678-406527). We paid cash in euros.
- We recommend bringing a tent with cooking gear, as it is a good 150km drive from Dakhla to the start of the good stretches for spotlighting. We slept twice at Oued Jenna and once near Bougouffa trail. Had no problem at the sleeping place.
- We bought Diesel one time from a shepherd along the Aousserd road near the Bougouffa trail because we did not have enough fuel to spotlight that night. One time we had car trouble, but we where able to fix it ourselves.
- Always carry enough cash, paying by card is almost impossible anywhere including gas stations. We paid everything in Dirhams, , except the car.
- We went a lot offroad along the Aousserd road and understood from a person from the local government that there were mines only around and after Aousserd. The rest had been cleared.
- All done with the flashlight, easy area to spotlight. Thermal imaging camera (no problems at the airport) was difficult with the amount of rocks that stayed hot.
- Most locations via tripreports from mammalswatching and cloudbirders and sightings on observado.org, Inaturalist and Ebird. Through [Tim de Boer](#) and [Willem Wind](#)'s account you can view a lot of our sightings.
- We took a form with us for police checks, ended up having to show passport only once. No negative experience with the police. Form at the end of this report.



Dinner with the team – Willem Wind

Mammals

We drove 4 nights and 1 morning looking for mammals. First evening tried with thermal imaging camera, this was difficult because many stones remained warm. Normally this is my preference, but here the flashlight also worked well. No problems with the local people (shepherds and other traffic). We also found a Fennec Fox den and saw animals here on two mornings and evening with daylight. We were able to observe them beautifully from a distance with the telescope.

1. Cape Hare
2. Lesser Egyptian Jerboa
3. North African Gerbil
4. Fat-tailed Jird
5. Desert Hedgehog
6. African Wildcat
7. Sand Cat
8. African Golden Wolf
9. Rüppell's Fox
10. Fennec Fox
11. Libyan Striped Weasel



Klaas Jan and Jillis - Tim de Boer

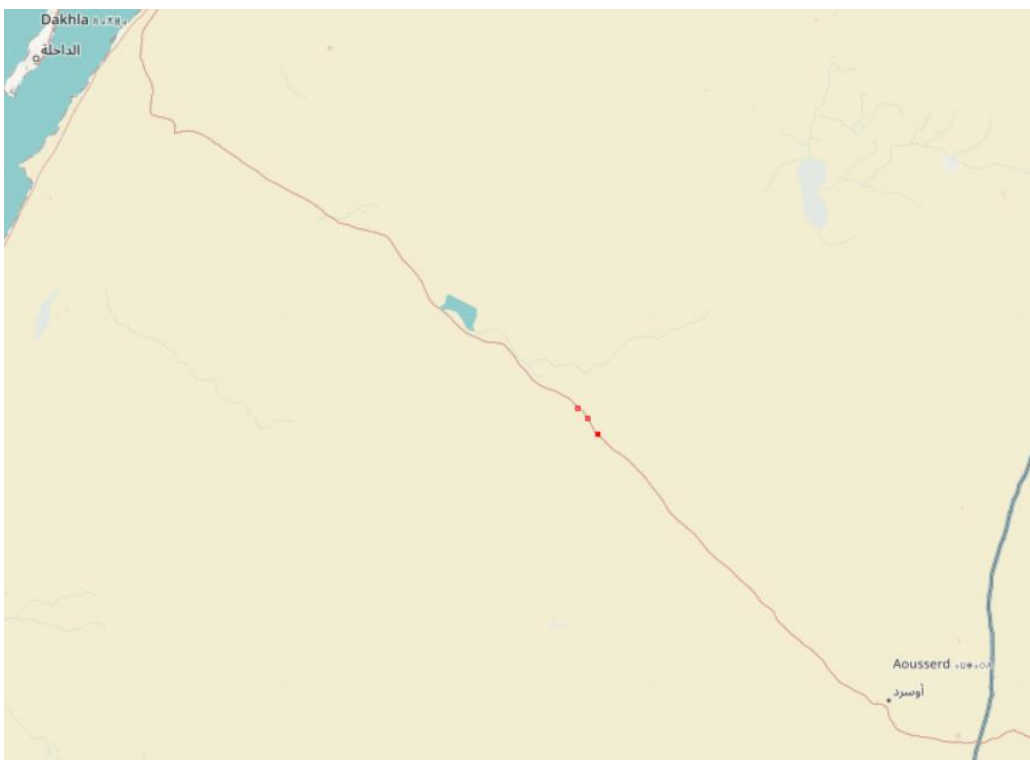
Sand Cat - *Felis margarita*

3 sightings – 4 animals



Sandcat - Klaas Jan Arkema

Four animals on two nights. Especially in the 10km before and 50km after the Bougouffa trail, you have good habitat along the road and therefore a chance to see the cat. This was also reflected in our sightings, we got all our sightings close together.



Fennec Fox - *Vulpes zerda*

19 sightings – 25 animals.



One-eye Fennec Fox - Klaas Jan Arkema

We found one den of Fennec Fox where we had multiple day observations. (23.086, -14.911- south west side of de road)



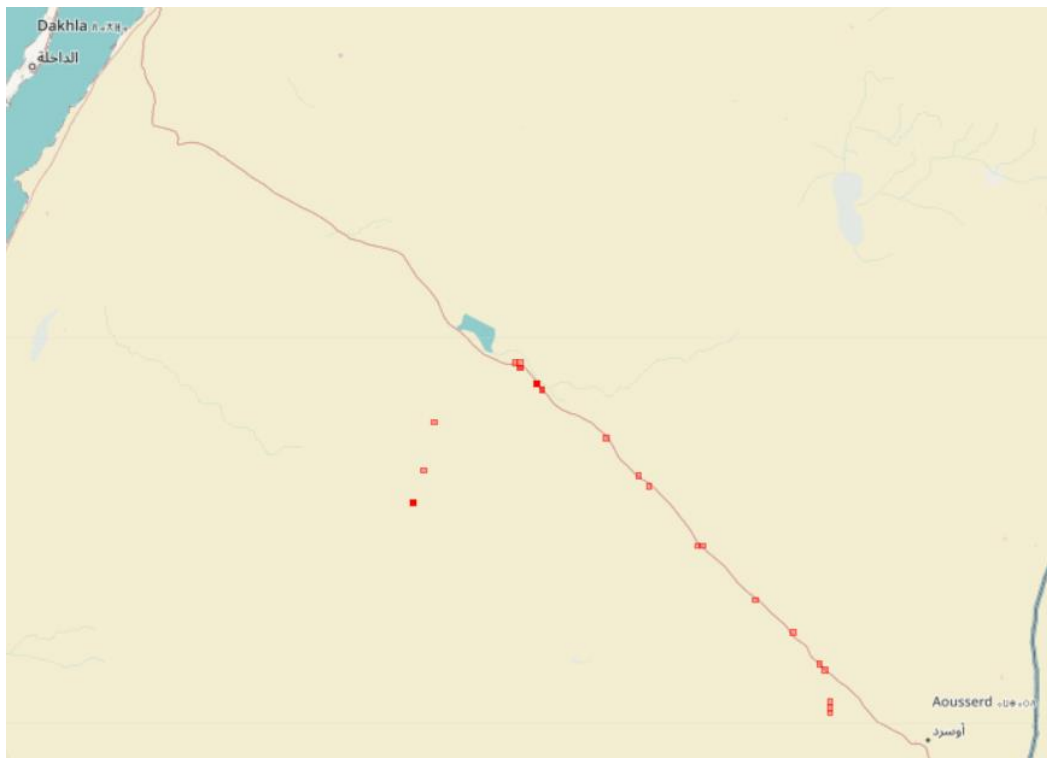
Ruppell's Fox – *Vulpes rueppellii*

16 sightings – 17 animals



Ruppell's Fox - Klaas Jan Arkema

In several places along the Aousserd road and Bougouffa trail. Notable were the sightings at the rocks just before Aousserd, here we had several quality sightings. Because we used the telescope in combination with flashlight, we were able to view them nicely even though the animals were far away.



African Golden Wolf - *Canis lupaster*

11 sightings – 15 animals



African Golden Wolf - Klaas Jan Arkema

We had the Wolves more toward Aousserd in the more rocky sections. They are very vocal and the Shepherds' dogs respond to this.

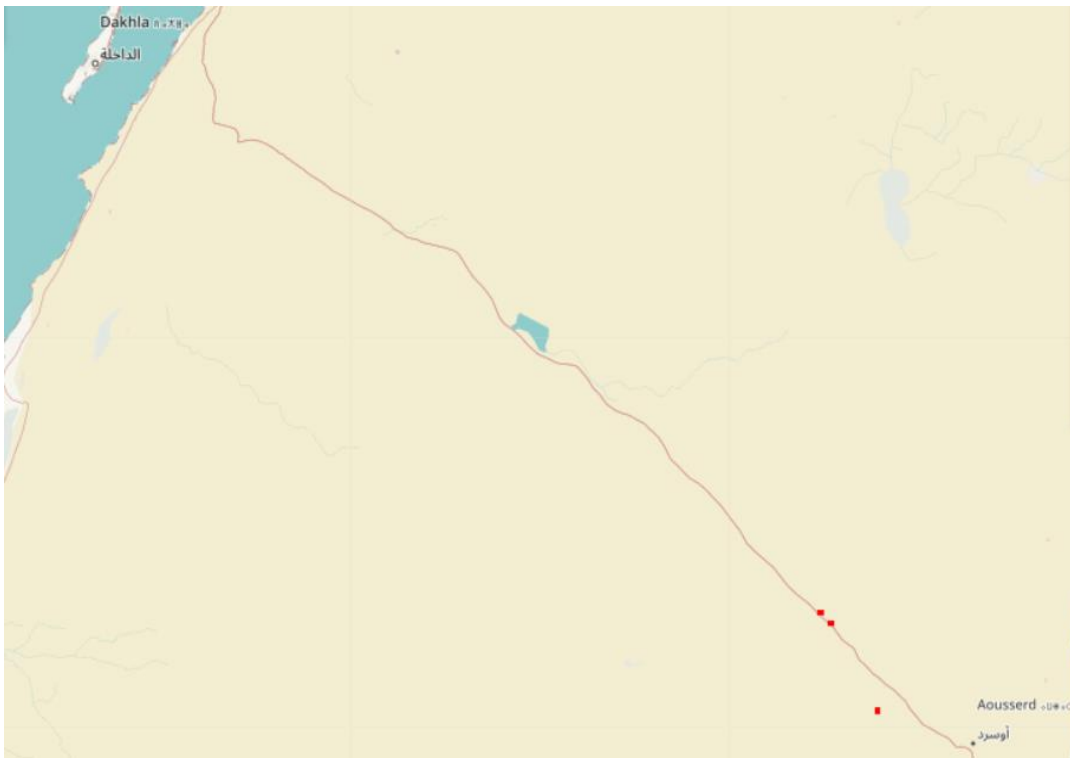


African Wild Cat - *Felis lybica*

3 sightings – 3 animals



African Wild Cat - Tim de Boer



Libyan Striped Weasel - *Ictonyx libycus*

2 sightings – 2 animals (probably same individual)



Libyan Striped Weasel - Klaas Jan Arkema

Two quality sightings of possibly the same animal on different days. It was notable that both times there was interaction with Fennec Fox. During the first sighting the Weasel seemed to follow the Fennec Fox so you had them both in one binocular view. Second time there were two Fennec Foxes, only this time they were quickly gone and only the Weasel remained visible.



Birds

We saw most of the common species. But missed some specials. We saw a Siskin, special to see this species so southern. [Lanner Falcon \(nestlocation\)](#) we had on the power pylon near Aousserd. [African Crested Tern here](#). And [Pale Craig Martin here](#).

1. Northern Shoveler
2. Pallid Swift
3. Little Swift
4. Great Spotted Cuckoo
5. Spotted Sandgrouse
6. Eurasian Collared Dove
7. Laughing Dove
8. Common Moorhen
9. Eurasian Coot
10. Little Grebe
11. Greater Flamingo
12. Eurasian Stone-curlew
13. Eurasian Oystercatcher
14. Grey Plover
15. Common Ringed Plover
16. Kentish Plover
17. Eurasian Whimbrel
18. Eurasian Curlew
19. Bar-tailed Godwit
20. Ruddy Turnstone
21. Red Knot
22. Curlew Sandpiper
23. Sanderling
24. Dunlin
25. Little Stint
26. Common Redshank
27. Common Greenshank
28. Courser
29. Slender-billed Gull
30. Audouin's Gull
31. Yellow-legged Gull
32. Lesser Black-backed Gull
33. Caspian Tern
34. West African Crested Tern
35. Sandwich Tern
36. Common Tern
37. Parasitic Jaeger
38. White Stork
39. Northern Gannet
40. Great Cormorant
41. Eurasian Spoonbill
42. Grey Heron
43. Little Egret
44. Osprey
45. Long-legged Buzzard
46. Short-eared Owl
47. Pharaoh Eagle-Owl
48. Common Kestrel
49. Lanner Falcon
50. Peregrine Falcon
51. Great Grey Shrike
52. Brown-necked Raven
53. Greater Hoopoe-Lark
54. Thick-billed Lark
55. Desert Lark
56. Bar-tailed Lark
57. Thekla's Lark
58. Crested Lark
59. Temminck's Lark
60. Greater Short-toed Lark
61. Pale Crag Martin Barn Swallow
62. Western House Martin
63. Red-rumped Swallow
64. Common Chiffchaff
65. Cricket Warbler
66. Eurasian Blackcap
67. Tristram's Warbler
68. Sardinian Warbler
69. Western Subalpine Warbler
70. Spectacled Warbler
71. Fulvous Babbler
72. Bluethroat
73. Common Redstart
74. Whinchat
75. European Stonechat
76. Northern Wheatear
77. Desert Wheatear
78. Western Black-eared Wheatear
79. Red-rumped Wheatear
80. White-crowned
81. Black Wheatear
82. House Sparrow
83. Desert Sparrow
84. White Wagtail
85. Trumpeter Finch
86. Eurasian Siskin
87. Corn Bunting
88. House Bunting

Other fun locations

In [Gleib Jediane](#) we saw the Chameleon and the Green toad. The toads can be found throughout the day, you can hear them well because they are very vocal. The Chameleon you have to look for at night with the flashlight.

[The location of fish in Imlili](#)

A [small lake](#) with ducks and coots, several rare birds have been seen here. Also good for butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles. We also saw the scorpion here.



Imlili - Klaas Jan Arkema



Coptodon guineensis - Willem Wind



Chamaeleo chamaeleon - Tim de Boer



Bufotes boulengeri - Tim de Boer



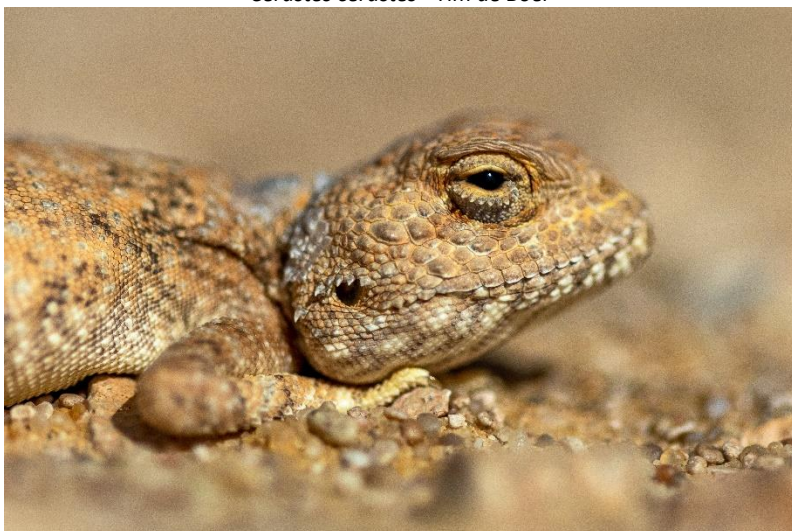
Buthus occitanus - Willem Wind



Uromastix acanthinura - Tim de Boer



Cerastes cerastes - Tim de Boer



Trapelus boehmei - Tim de Boer



Glamping - Tim de Boer



Arabian Camel - Willem Wind



Fennec den - Jillis Roos



Fennec tracks & Jillis - Klaas Jan Arkema



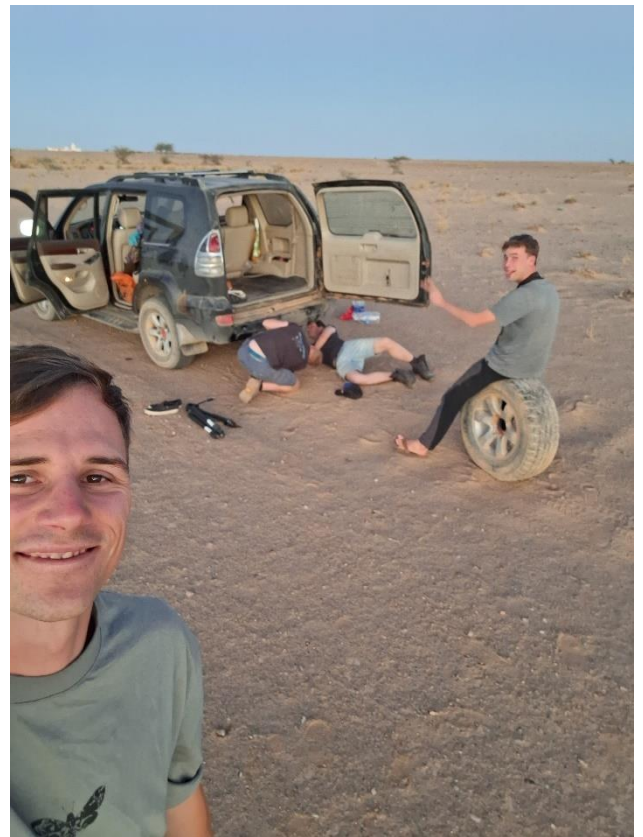
African Golden Wolf tracks - Klaas Jan Arkema



Horned Viper & Tim - Willem Wind



Buying diesel - Willem Wind



Car trouble 40km into Bougouffa trail – Klaas Jan Arkema

Document for the police

Nom / Naam	
Prenoms / First names	
Date de Naissance / Day of Birth	
Lieu de Naissance / Place of Birth	
Nom de Pere / Name father	
Nom de Mere / Name mother	
Nationalité / Nationality	
Profession / Profession	
Adresse / Address	
Numero de Passeport / Passport Number	
Date de Deliverance / Delivery Date	
Date d'expiration / Expiry date	
Motif du Voyage / Motive of traveling	
Marque du Vehicule / Car brand	
Date D'entrée en Maroc / Entry date	
Date de depart du Maroc / Leaving date	
Ville d'entée / Town of entry	
Numero de Police / (number entry stamp)	